

BEST AVAILABLE COPY**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel claims 51-64, 96-109, and 116-118. A complete listing of claims pending in the application following entry of this Amendment are presented as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) An article of footwear having an upper and a sole structure secured to the upper, the sole structure comprising:

a bladder formed of a barrier material, the bladder enclosing a fluid capable of exerting an outward force upon the barrier material; and
a reinforcing structure at least partially recessed into the barrier material and bonded to the barrier material, at least a portion of the reinforcing structure being placed in tension by the outward force upon the barrier material,

wherein each of the bladder and reinforcing structure form a portion of an exterior surface of the footwear, and the bladder and the reinforcing structure are substantially co-planar at an interface on the exterior surface between the bladder and the reinforcing structure.

2. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein the bladder includes a first surface, an opposite second surface, and a sidewall extending between the first surface and the second surface.

3. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 2, wherein a plurality of interior bonds join the first surface with the second surface, the interior bonds being spaced inward from the sidewall.

4. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 2, wherein the reinforcing structure has a first portion, a second portion, and a plurality of connecting portions extending between the first portion and the second portion.

5. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 4, wherein the first portion is secured to the bladder at an interface between the first surface and the sidewall, and the second portion is secured to the bladder at an interface between the second surface and the sidewall.

6. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 4, wherein the connecting portions are at least partially recessed into the sidewall and bonded to the sidewall.

7. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 6, wherein the fluid is pressurized so as to exert the outward force and the connecting portions are placed in tension by the outward force upon the barrier material.

8. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 6, wherein the fluid is pressurized so as to exert the outward force and the connecting portions restrain distension of the sidewall due to the outward force upon the barrier material.

9. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 5, wherein the first portion extends along a lateral side of the bladder, around a heel region of the bladder, and along a medial side of the bladder.

10. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 9, wherein at least one bridge member extends laterally across the bladder and connects opposite sides of at least one of the first portion and the second portion.

11. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 4, wherein at least one of the connecting portions is inclined.

12. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 4, wherein a space between two adjacent connecting portions is positioned in a rear-lateral region of the sole structure.

13. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein a material forming the reinforcing structure has a greater modulus of elasticity than a material forming the bladder.

14. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein the bladder and reinforcing structure are secured directly to the upper.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein extensions of the reinforcing structure extend outward from the bladder and are secured to the upper.

17. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein the bladder includes a first chamber and a separate second chamber with different pressures.

18. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein an upper surface of the sole structure forms a ridge that defines a lasting surface, and the upper is secured to the sole structure in an area defined by the lasting surface.

19. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 18, wherein the reinforcing structure forms the ridge.

20. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 18, wherein the upper is secured to both the bladder and the reinforcing structure.

21. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein a heel counter extends upward from the reinforcing structure.

22. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein a plurality of extensions extend upward from the reinforcing structure.

23. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 22, wherein at least one of the extensions extend over an instep area of the footwear and form lace loops for receiving a lace.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 1, wherein the bladder and the reinforcing structure form a beveled area in a rear lateral area of the sole structure.

26. (Previously Presented) An article of footwear having an upper and a sole structure secured to the upper, the sole structure comprising:

a bladder extending from a lateral side to a medial side of the sole structure and through a substantial portion of a longitudinal length of the sole structure, the bladder being formed of a barrier material and having a first surface, an opposite second surface, and a sidewall extending between the first surface and the second surface, and the bladder enclosing a fluid that exerts an outward force upon the barrier material; and

a reinforcing structure having a first portion, a second portion, and a plurality of connecting portions, the first portion being secured to the bladder at an interface between the first surface and the sidewall, the second portion being secured to the bladder at an interface between the second surface and the sidewall, and the connecting portions extending between the first portion and the second portion, the connecting portions being at least partially recessed into the sidewall and bonded to the sidewall, at least one of the connecting portions being placed in tension by the outward force upon the barrier material,

wherein each of the sidewall and connecting portions form a portion of an exterior surface of the footwear, and the sidewall and the connecting portions are substantially co-planar at an interface between the sidewall and the connecting portions on the exterior surface.

27. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein a material forming the reinforcing structure has a greater modulus of elasticity than a material forming the bladder.

28. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 27, wherein the connecting portions restrain distension of the sidewall due to the outward force upon the barrier material.

29. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein at least one of the connecting portions is inclined.

30. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein a space between two adjacent connecting portions is positioned in a rear-lateral region of the sole structure.

31. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein the first portion has a generally u-shaped configuration that extends along a lateral side of the bladder, around a heel region of the bladder, and along a medial side of the bladder.

32. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 31, wherein at least one bridge member extends laterally across the bladder and connects opposite sides of at least one of the first portion and the second portion.

33. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 31, wherein extensions of the reinforcing structure extend outward from the bladder and are secured to the upper.

34. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein a plurality of interior bonds join the first surface with the second surface, the interior bonds being spaced inward from the sidewall.

35. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein at least one flexion indentation is formed in the second surface, and a space that includes the fluid extends between the indentation and the first surface.

36. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 35, wherein at least one interior bond joins the first surface with the indentation, the at least one interior bond being spaced inward from the sidewall.

37. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein the bladder and reinforcing structure are secured directly to the upper.

38. (Cancelled)

39. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein the first surface has a concave configuration in at least a heel region of the footwear.

40. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein an outsole is secured to the second surface.

41. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein the first portion of the reinforcing structure forms a ridge that defines a lasting surface for securing the upper to the sole structure.

42. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 41, wherein the upper is secured to both the bladder and the reinforcing structure.

43. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein a heel counter extends upward from the reinforcing structure.

44. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein a plurality of extensions extend upward from the reinforcing structure.

45. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 44, wherein at least one of the extensions extend over an instep area of the footwear and form lace loops for receiving a lace.

46. (Cancelled)

47. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein the barrier material is a first sheet and a second sheet of a thermoplastic material.

48. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 47, wherein the first sheet and the second sheet are joined together to form a peripheral bond that is positioned adjacent the second surface.

49. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 47, wherein the first sheet forms the first surface and the sidewall, and the second sheet forms the second surface, the first sheet and the second sheet being joined together around a periphery of the bladder to form a peripheral bond.

50. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 26, wherein the bladder and the reinforcing structure form a beveled area in a rear lateral area of the sole structure.

51-79. (Cancelled)

80. (Original) An article of footwear having an upper and a sole structure secured to the upper, the sole structure comprising:

a bladder extending from a lateral side to a medial side of the sole structure and through a substantial portion of a longitudinal length of the sole structure, the bladder being formed of a barrier material and having a first surface, an opposite second surface, and a sidewall extending between the first surface and the second surface, and the bladder enclosing a pressurized fluid that exerts an outward force upon the barrier material, the barrier material having a first modulus of elasticity; and

a reinforcing structure having a first portion, a second portion, and a plurality of connecting portions, the first portion being secured to the bladder at an interface between the first surface and the sidewall, the second portion being secured to the bladder at an interface between the second surface and the sidewall, and the connecting portions extending between the first portion and the second portion, the connecting portions being at least partially recessed into the sidewall and bonded to the sidewall, the reinforcing structure being formed of a second material having a second modulus of elasticity, the first modulus of elasticity being less than the second modulus of elasticity.

81. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein the bladder and reinforcing structure are secured directly to the upper.

82. (Cancelled)

83. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein an outsole is secured to the second surface.

84. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein at least one of the connecting portions is placed in tension by the outward force upon the barrier material.

85. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein the connecting portions restrain distension of the sidewall due to the outward force upon the barrier material.

86. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein at least one of the connecting portions is inclined.

87. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein a space between two adjacent connecting portions is positioned in a rear-lateral region of the sole structure.

88. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein the first portion has a generally u-shaped configuration that extends along a lateral side of the bladder, around a heel region of the bladder, and along a medial side of the bladder.

89. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 88, wherein at least one bridge member extends laterally across the bladder and connects opposite sides of the first portion.

90. (Withdrawn) The article of footwear recited in claim 88, wherein extensions of the reinforcing structure extend outward from the bladder and are secured to the upper.

91. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein a plurality of interior bonds join the first surface with the second surface, the interior bonds being spaced inward from the sidewall.

92. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein at least one flexion indentation is formed in the second surface, and a space that includes the fluid extends between the indentation and the first surface.

93. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 80, wherein at least one flexion indentation is formed in the second surface.

94. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 93, wherein the indentation extends from a lateral side of the bladder to a medial side of the bladder.

95. (Original) The article of footwear recited in claim 93, wherein at least one interior bond joins the first surface with the indentation, the at least one interior bond being spaced inward from the sidewall.

96-109. (Cancelled)

110. (Previously Presented) An article of footwear having an upper and a sole structure secured to the upper, the sole structure comprising:

a bladder formed of a barrier material that encloses a pressurized fluid, the bladder having a first surface, an opposite second surface, and a sidewall extending between the first surface and the second surface; and

a reinforcing structure bonded to the bladder, the reinforcing structure including:

a first portion positioned at an interface of the first surface and the sidewall, the first portion extending along a lateral side of the bladder, around a heel region of the bladder, and along a medial side of the bladder,

a second portion spaced from the first portion and positioned at an interface of the second surface and the sidewall, the second portion extending along the lateral side, around the heel region, and along a medial side of the bladder, and

a plurality of connecting portions extending along the sidewall and between the first portion and the second portion, the connecting portions being recessed into sidewall,

the reinforcing structure being formed of a material with a greater modulus of elasticity than the barrier material, and at least one of the connecting portions being in tension when the sole component is in an uncompressed state to restrict distension of the sidewall due to an outward force induced by the pressurized fluid.

111. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear recited in claim 110, wherein at least one of the connecting portions is inclined.

112. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear recited in claim 110, wherein spaces are formed between the connecting portions.

113. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear recited in claim 110, wherein one of the spaces is positioned in a rear-lateral region of the sole component.

114. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear recited in claim 110, wherein the reinforcing structure includes vent apertures that release air from between the bladder and the reinforcing structure.

115. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear recited in claim 110, wherein edges of the reinforcing member are beveled.

116-118. (Cancelled)